137

a) The Acacia albida called kokuruni (Banankoroni).

Plate I

b) In the foreground, baskets of spiralled straw called yugu (Ségou market).

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c) Drawing representing Faro (Sama).

1:Dieterlen--77b E-5 (1946-1949) 1951 FA8 Bambara FA8

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a) Ngoyo tomatoes (Ségou market).

Plate II

b) Faro's water gourd (Ségou market).

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(a) Pot dipping after firing (Konodimini).

Plate IV

(b) Communal anvil, kula, of the blacksmiths (Konodimini).

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771 came to me to complain that [332] my Negroes were using a 777 satala (1) to take water from his jug.

415 783 177

1. A kind of saucepan made of copper or tin, of European origin, used by Moslem Sudanese for their ritual ablutions.

" 'What difference does that make to you?' I asked him.

" 'What difference does it make!' he answered with an angry air.

"And with that he favored me with the following astonishing line of reasoning:

"'Now you see, I am not a (Moslem) marabout and if the marabouts take water from my jar with the satala, the water that remains in the jar will necessarily be sanctified because it came into contact with that vessel. My children and I drink this water and, since we don't know how to salaam and don't fast, and since we eat pork, God (2) will punish us for having failed

2. That is, in Niany's mind, the nyana called Ngalla (Allah) by the Bambara.

to obey his orders. For, after all, any water that has touched a satala makes a marabout (3) of the person who drinks it. That is

3. That is, an initiate of Ngalla (Allah).

what I heard from my father."

776 The net result is that, on the whole, Ngalla (Allah) is regarded as one of the nyana which we have mentioned and for which the Bambara has a superstitious respect without for that matter being a worshiper. He avoids any contact with all that concerns the nyana, not because of hostility, but for fear of incurring its wrath on account of some impurity. Just as he may call upon any convenient nyana for aid, so he asks the help of

776 day by the soli (those who are to be excised). It is a kind of semolina
782 (very fine couscous called basi) which is eaten with an /88/ extremely
304 spicy sauce of smoked fish. It is called basi k'li because, in order to
262 provide this repast, the little girls are obliged to run from door to door, clapping their hands, singing and begging (k'li).

776 Among the invisible wanderers, there is one which is strongly reminiscent of our "werewolf." It is the souroukou, an imaginary
825 hyena, whose supposed existence has brought about a strange practice.
514 Every evening one sees groups of little boys and groups of little girls, turning aside a little into the bush: they all go in a band to take their last precautions and attend to the wants of nature -- union is strength even against the gnéna.

776 Many other gnéna are among this group that roams the village; they flutter in the b'lon, or entrance huts, they live in horrible filth, hung over doors, on the walls, and on the posts that support the terrace roofs, and the only hangings to be seen anywhere are eggshells, heads of millet, fruit pits, and seeds from the bush, which are offered to these friends as saraka. Nor are private huts without them, for the gnéna roll in the ashes of the hearth, snore on the mats, and take the air in the conari (1); there are some everywhere.

● [415]

1. The conari is a baked earth receptacle used for water, beer, and cooking food.

Finally, there are gnéna or djiné who are powerful. Without mercy for their enemies, whom they abandon to all kinds of sorcery and evil spells, they are full of both attention and consideration for their friends. They can cause sickness, poverty, and other calamities to descend on a family, a village, or a whole region; but they can also side with them against a visible or invisible enemy; they can protect them, exorcise anything, and grant real blessings to each and all. The characteristic trait of the gnéna, in fact, is not that they can refrain from doing harm, but that they can also do good directly by performing a good act. Some choose to live in a rock, others prefer a knoll or a large tree near the village, and there are those who

88| as ugly as possible, and plays the fool. Armed with a long stick -- the stick which is used to stir the gruel that is simmering on the fire (1) -- she darts out of the village, agile as a gazelle. Her companions

•[445]

1. To-n-galama: a stick with a large, flattened end, used to stir gruel in the pot.

all chase her at a full run, giving many shouts; they circle around the walls four times. At every fork in the path they form a circle, dance with frenzy, and throw large handfuls of basi and smoked fish sauce to the spirits without keeping count. "Dégé dounlé, idiots," shouts the smeared girl, and all her retinue repeats with ever increasing enthusiasm: "Nalouma, big fool...." And this day, which is not very edifying, is full of delights for the little Bambara girls who are to be excised.

The little soli boys are satisfied with sacrificing to n'tomo, a good fetish which is their protector, but although they dance wearing masks with six, seven, and sometimes eight horns, they do not [725] flagellate themselves, or at least flagellation is not required on this day.

2. The Soli Si Festival, or the Vigil of the Circumcised

Here we are on the eve of the circumcision! It is black night, d'lo, or sorghum /sic/ beer, hums and foams in the earthenware bowls, and a thin mist comes out of all the huts and envelops them. Here karité grease sputters as it melts in the pot and browns the skin of a chicken or the leg of a goat; there one hears the loud laughter of people with full stomachs, the hiccups of a glutton, the dry and decisive sound of two heavy lips releasing five great /178/ sticky fingers glued to each other by a remainder of gruel. Their foreheads [30] decorated with beads in a kind of crown of white, red, and yellow, 291] the colors of the rainbow, and their bodies draped in blankets, Roman style, groups of women glide silently like shadows along the alleys, carrying on their heads huge gourds full of dégé, millet flour mixed with honey water and milk.

881 until they are completely healed; for it is not until evening, when the setting sun reddens the horizon and takes on its bloody hue that [292] they re-enter the village. From this day on they wear a costume (all yellow if they are Bambara) of trousers, a blouse, and on their heads a kind of handkerchief tied under the chin (4). They pass the time in

4. In some villages, instead of the yellow handkerchief the circumcised have a cap with two points. In Bani country the circumcised wear the blouse and handkerchief, or cap, and nothing more.

making mats, singing, striking together gourd disks strung on a stick, and especially in eating, "for they are being stuffed," and in sleeping. /181/

881 But in speaking of the boys, I forgot the little girls! They undress under the tree nearest to the sacred karite. Naked as a worm, 304 each one when her turn comes runs at top speed with her abdomen to the ground and throws herself into the arms of a woman, also of the blacksmith caste, who immediately cuts her. On a braided platter, [285 made of fine, pliable grass, the mother or her substitute receives the 415 bloody fragment which will be a grigri, a talisman or good-luck 189] charm for the house, and while the gunpowder speaks, the disabled girl, pretending not to be suffering at all from the loss of her clitoris, goes back to her place, and another replaces her.

881 The session ends with the last girl, and the crowd breaks out in a song of joy and triumph. The mother, the eldest sister, or a [492] serving woman wraps the excised girl in a big white cloth and carries her astride her back to the village to the hut which has been prepared for her (1). This carrying, so laughable in itself (they can walk, even

[621 346]

1. Each village is divided into quarters. The excised girls of each quarter have their hut in that quarter.

881 [887] Moment by moment the old women come closer and the word "Kouyo ê, Kouyo ê" resounds louder and louder. But now they come out, and their bodies move as if they were made of rings, so closely do they imitate a worm surprised by a ray of sunshine who is hastily returning to its nest in the ground. With their pointed chins, wrinkled skins, and toothless jaws, they look like real savages as they furiously scrape two iron rods; on their bald heads they wear dirty towels, the filthy appurtenances of sorceresses, wound without skill or taste. With spear in hand the young citizens appear in full trousers; they wear caps with double points or loud-colored turbans with long fringes, and their bodies disappear under loose blouses still all perfumed with the musty smell of the bottom of a storage bin, all stiff and shiny under a paste of starch. They leap and shout, they brandish their arms, assume the look of warriors, and especially assume such a look of conceit that one's laughter is unloosed.

[415] After the boys come the girls, fanning their "alms purses" all decorated with cowrie shells; these are platters braided of fine, pliable grass, doubtless those onto which the bloody remnants were placed on the morning of the soli si, or arms' vigil. They come forward stiffly, [301] and glide rather than walk over the ground, for their feet are weighed down by small chains and iron rings, and can hardly be lifted. Gold or copper crescents pull down the septum of their noses, a handful of striped periwinkle shells hangs from the lobe of each ear, several coral necklaces encircle their heads, and everywhere, chiefly around their necks, are pieces of amber interspersed by grigris and beads of every size and shade. Bambara of the noumou, or blacksmith caste, 881 302 the Marka turned Bambara, and every Bambara girl /196/ of more or less mixed stock whose head was not shaved at the da woro, or festival of the sixth day, has their hair braided, and on top of the crest which ends in two small braids along each ear, there is an odd little bundle, a handful of hair. This is in memory of the eighth day after the girl's birth, the day when she was given her name, and what she is wearing is nothing less than what the Bambara call "the hair of the womb" (1). If this has been lost, as is usually the case, the

761 on the branches of the sacred tree under which the fetish dwells and
782 at the door of its temple, and the members of its staff know how to
764 extol their god. Under these conditions they are without pity; they
778 bleed the bereaved family white, so that the tax demanded by our circle officers (2) is nothing compared to the tax that they have to

[651]

2. The head tax is 3.50 francs per person and 5 francs for the servants of Europeans. Here France is surely not a "tyrant," but a tender mother.

pay. /227/

782 What do they not have to give for a sacrifice to the Komo, for
764 example? The whole house is turned upside down to find goats, dogs,
[824] kola nuts, roosters, and hens, gnâma-n-kou (Amormum melegueta), and djalakouma (a plant whose name I do not know). The family needs all this, cost what it may, and if they have to buy it all they have to pay double or triple the value of the objects, for others make profits from their necessity. First a dog or a goat is sacrificed to appease the fetish and pay respects to it. Then to find out whether it is satisfied and its hatred assuaged, two red roosters and two hens with golden necks bite the dust. A bara (1) (gourd) full of gnâma-n-

●[415 824]

1. This bara (a large pumpkin /courge/ with a small opening at the top) can hold from 18 to 20 liters of liquid. The true gourd is half of a pumpkin.

kou fruit and another full of djalakouma are offered. One portion of these fruits is used for holy water (2); the other is sold for the benefit

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2. The holy water of the Komo is made of roots and leaves of the djalakouma and the fruit of the

4: Henry--264 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

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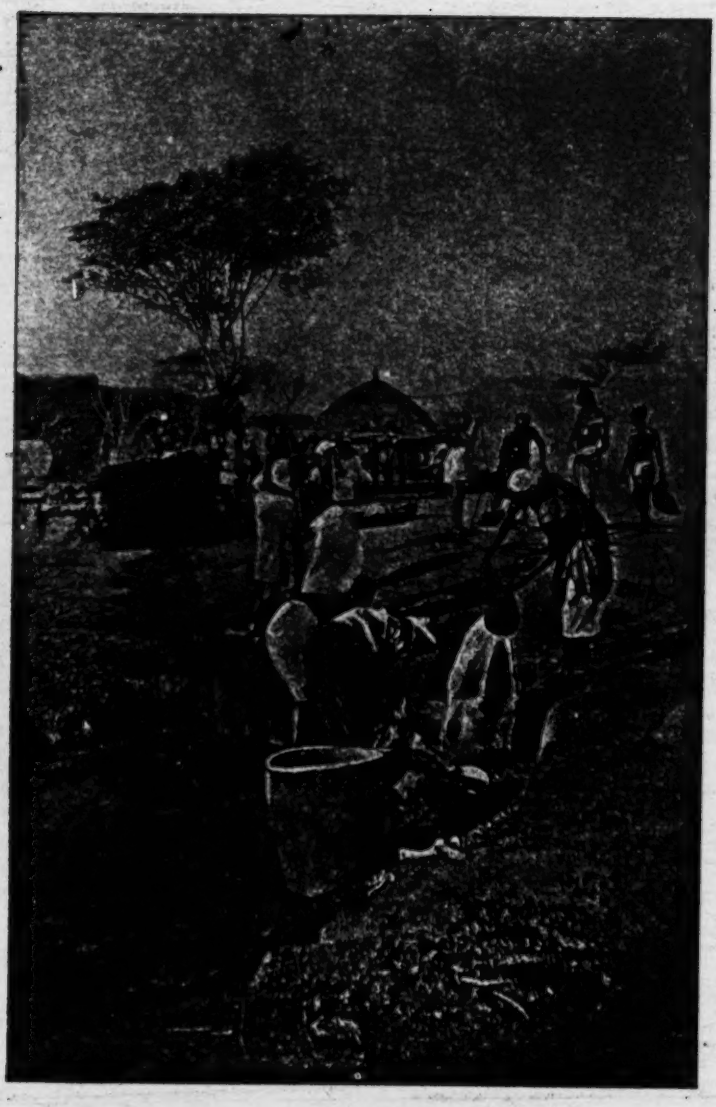

At the edge of the well, in Bambara country.

4: Henry--265 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

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The Ségou bank of the Niger.

4: Henry--272 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

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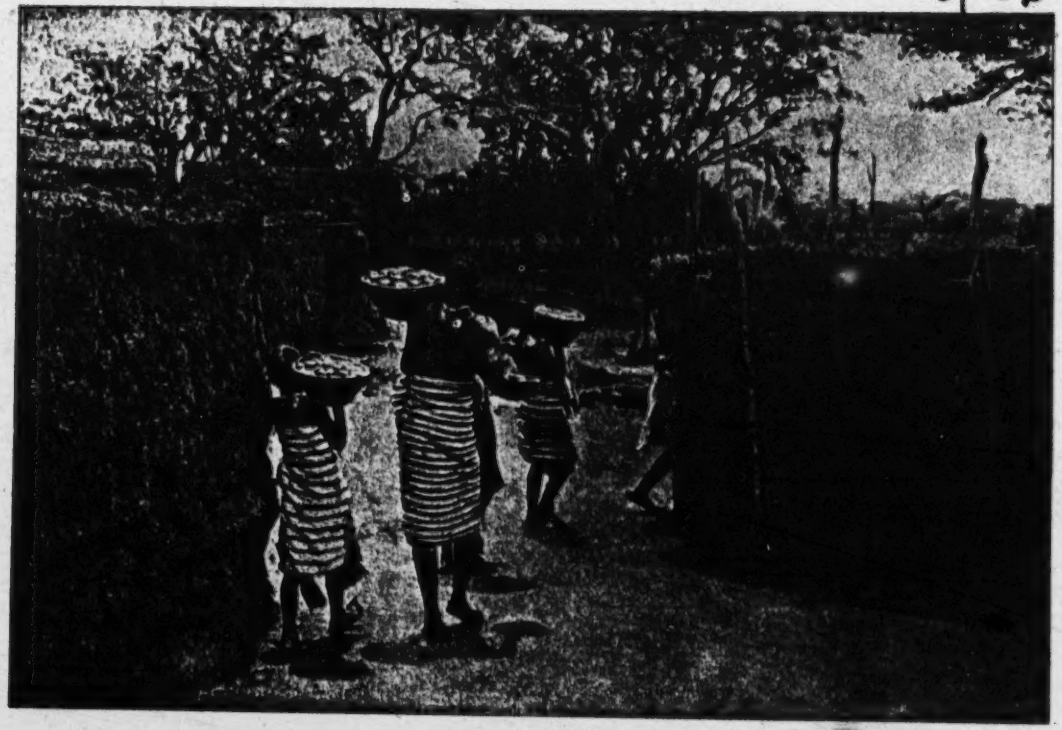
Sacrifice of a hen to the "family boli."

4: Henry--283 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8



Bambara wedding.
The meal is carried to the young bride and her maids of honor (at Moundjirila).